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RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2023
RUEH DS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2144
RUEH RL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0686
RUEH BY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1421
RUEH DK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1779
RUEH KM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2200
RUEH NR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4631
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1286
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000486

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ELECTORAL VIOLENCE HITS HOME: TENS OF THOUSANDS
DISPLACED AHEAD OF RUNOFF

REF: A. HARARE 475 B. HARARE 470

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: According to independent international organizations, as many as 20-30 thousand Zimbabweans have been displaced due to electoral violence since the March 29 elections, with many more likely unreported. A senior official with one humanitarian provider reports that access to areas impacted by the violence remains severely limited by ZANU-PF's systematic campaign to control voting in rural areas. Despite close coordination with the donor community and each other, aid organizations have only been able to assist under 4,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of May 28. One major NGO has been completely barred from providing assistance, others have reportedly been restricted at local levels, and as the June 27 run-off date grows nearer the situation is expected only to worsen. The reported suspension of humanitarian aid by the ruling party suggests that ZANU-PF may be gearing up to use assistance as a partisan tool close to the election day, as they have done in previous pre-election periods. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On June 2, poloffs met with International Organization for Migration (IOM) Zimbabwe Deputy Chief of Mission Dyane Epstein (closely protect) to discuss reports of displacements concentrated in rural eastern Zimbabwe as a result of ZANU-PF-led political violence in advance of the June 27 presidential run-off. Epstein was cautious about information sharing and was careful to note that reliable data remains extremely difficult to obtain in the restricted operational environment. However, using unconfirmed reports from various partner organizations, IOM, which has the lead among the coordinated humanitarian effort for IDPs, has stated that 20-30 thousand Zimbabweans have been displaced, with many more likely unreported (do not attribute to IOM).

13. (C) As of May 28, IOM has confirmed and assisted in 4,970 post-election cases of displacement, with an additional 5,083 confirmed cases that remain unreachable. (NOTE: The humanitarian community in Zimbabwe refers to IDPs as Mobile

and Vulnerable Persons (MVPs) in order to avoid alienating the government. END NOTE.) Epstein said she understood that many of the displaced had not moved to other areas as is typical for IDPs in emergency situations, but had instead remained in their home areas without shelter. Epstein could not confirm numbers and did note that a significant number of IDPs had migrated to other areas, including Harare. (NOTE: Mission and IOM are aware some 500 IDPs are currently being sheltered in MDC headquarters (Reftel B). END NOTE.) She lamented that the sensitivity of the post-election political period has made keeping reliable data and performing detailed follow-up with IDPs -- all part of IOM's normal procedure -- impossible. In fact, the situation has so deteriorated that IOM has been providing assistance in some areas in the middle of the night.

¶4. (C) When asked about the disparity between total cases and total assisted, Epstein stated that it was "100 percent an access issue," and that she believed it was a worse operating environment for humanitarian organizations than even in 2005, when ZANU-PF's Operation Murambatsvina displaced some 700,000 suspected opposition supporters. Epstein noted that restricted or banned access to areas of violence and displacement, coupled with intimidation of NGO staff, meant that service provision has been deeply impacted. IOM recently sent four low-profile assessment missions into the field to document cases; however, seven local IOM staff have been detained and interrogated by security forces for their efforts and an unmarked car carrying assessors was denied access.

¶5. (C) IOM noted that given the climate of intimidation, including the suspension by ZANU-PF of all of CARE International's assistance activities (Reftel A) and rumors of an upcoming ban on food distribution and other activities for all organizations, it had turned its focus to providing non-food items. Epstein said that food, always highly politicized in Zimbabwean politics, again seems to be the assistance commodity to which ZANU-PF is most sensitive. Of those IDPs that IOM, along with its local partners, has been able to reach, most had received a non-food item kit containing blankets, soap, sanitary items for women, cooking utensils and occasionally housing supplies. Epstein voiced concern that IOM could meet the same fate as CARE and others if it alienated the government in any way. (NOTE: IOM reportedly told the Zimbabwe humanitarian working group which meets regularly in Harare to coordinate assistance that the government had demanded it halt food assistance in Manicaland. Additional reports of closures of international NGO humanitarian assistance operations on local levels are arriving; Mission is working to confirm. END NOTE.)

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Mass displacement in advance of run-off voting is clearly an increasing concern for humanitarian organizations. With tens of thousands displaced from their homes and/or the wards in which they are registered (and must vote under Zimbabwean law), it may be difficult or impossible for many IDPs to be able to access their polling stations in time for election day. Additionally, the intimidation tactic of having their homes destroyed by ruling party supporters may further discourage those IDPs who are able to return to their home areas from voting their conscious or voting at all. As a result, the role of observers in advance of and on June 27 remains paramount to any hope of holding a contest that reflects the will of the people, or, conversely, to a clear rejection of the process as unfree and unfair. END COMMENT.

McGee